

an American struggle, with only a handful of countries remaining by our side.

General Casey, the commanding general in Baghdad, recently stated:

The longer we in the U.S. force continue to bear the main burden of Iraq's security, the longer it lengthens the time that the government of Iraq has to make the hard decisions about reconciliation and dealing with the militias.

General Casey also said:

It has always been my view that a heavy and sustained American military presence was not going to solve the problems in Iraq over the long term.

These are the generals President Bush said he listens to, and these are the people who are in command of our forces. These are voices which clearly disagree with the escalation of this war in Iraq.

Last week, America bid farewell to a good and decent man named Gerald Ford. I was honored to be at his funeral service in Grand Rapids, MI. He was a man who served at one of the most tumultuous times in American history. He inherited a war he couldn't win. Years later, when asked about that Vietnam war, President Ford said:

My approach was we inherited the problem with the job. It is my obligation on behalf of the country to try and solve the damn thing.

A generation later, our Nation faces a similar moment. We need to work together. We need to cooperate on a bipartisan basis to find a plan worthy of the courage and sacrifice of our men and women in uniform. It should begin now. It shouldn't be left to future Presidents.

If one reads the authorization for Iraq, one understands that the goals and missions of that statement for the use of force have changed dramatically. No weapons of mass destruction, no Saddam Hussein, no threat to America. It is time for us to announce that we achieved our goals in Iraq and now the American people need to hand this responsibility over to the people of that nation in Iraq.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PRYOR). The Senator from Florida is recognized.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, it is my understanding we have a 10-minute limit in morning business. I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed an extension of an additional 5 minutes, for a total of 15 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

IRAQ STUDY GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, on the basis of the very kind comments of the Senator from Illinois and others, very reasoned comments, many of these comments having been stimulated by the Iraq Study Group, which Mr. Baker and Mr. Hamilton both made their first presentation to the Congress, to our Senate Armed

Services Committee, back in early December, there is a lot of wisdom in this. The members of this study commission are some of the finest public servants to have been produced in this country and who obviously have the interest of this country at heart and who are struggling through this thicket of unclear occurrences in the Middle East and Central Asia. The goal is to figure a way in which there might be a chance at stabilizing Iraq politically and economically so that country has a chance to continue to exist with a democratically elected government. Yet, at this point, it is certainly not clear that stability is going to materialize. We certainly hope it does because of the consequences for America and for the rest of the free world if Iraq crumbles into chaos.

Looming over that entire region is an ascendant Iran, an Iran that is penetrating its influence, not only through the Shiites in Iraq but through its efforts in other parts of the Middle East, through Syria, through Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in the Palestinian Territories and as a result, we see the increasing influence of Iran and their brand of Shiite Islam. This is much to the consternation of a majority of the Arab world, in particular the Sunni Arab world as well as Israel.

In the 2 weeks preceding Christmas, I went on a visit to nine nations within a 12-day period, coming back just in time for Christmas. I was struck by the words I would hear from leaders in Israel where I first visited and the words I would hear by other Arab leaders, in some cases heads of state in Sunni Arab nations. Those words were almost identical in describing the real present and future threat posed by Iran. Of course, a lot of that concern was not only related to Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon but the immediate concern of Iraq spiraling into chaos, with no stability whatsoever, with the continued penetration by the Iranian Shiite influence.

I first went to Israel, and then continued on, visiting with the heads of state and the governments, in Palestine, and then on to Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, on to Qatar, Saudi Arabia, which, by the way, General Hayden, the head of the CIA, requested I go and spend time with the Saudi King, to urge the Saudis to exert their influence with the Sunni tribes in Iraq working towards reconciliation. I went from Saudi Arabia to Bahrain and then into Iraq. I have come away with a number of conclusions.

After visiting with the marines in western Iraq in Al Anbar Province, indeed a U.S. troop increase may well help us be better able to stabilize that part of Iraq. It is almost entirely Sunni, and the major threat there is al-Qaida, and of course the big military threat to us there is the IEDs, the improvised explosive devices.

I, along with Senator COLEMAN of Minnesota, as we were in Iraq together—and he can certainly speak for

himself, but I think we were persuaded by talking to the Marine commanders that an increase of some number of troops there would help them in what they are doing on a daily basis, which is trying to get the local Arab leaders to take over their own security. There is some degree of success in western Iraq but not in Baghdad. In Baghdad there is the sectarian violence that everyone has heard about.

What we were shocked to hear was from prominent Sunni members of the Government in Iraq, in Baghdad. One prominent, high-level Iraqi Government official, a shia, said to us: Sectarian violence is not the problem. Those were almost his exact words. In his opinion, the problem was the Sunni extremists, the Baathists who want to retain power, just like they had it in the old days under Saddam Hussein, and the foreign fighters from al-Qaida. For that high-level official to sit there and look two U.S. Senators in the eyes and say that sectarian violence was not the problem is either a complete misreading of the circumstances, the reality on the ground, or else his mind is so enveloped in sectarian violence and the old hatreds of the Shiites against the Sunnis and vice versa, those hatreds that are so ingrained that he can't see beyond that sectarianism.

So in a few days, we are going to receive the President's new plan. I look forward to seeing and hearing the details of it, but it is not a new plan because there is no plan now. We need some honest realism in the policy, not hardheaded ideology. This so-called new policy ought to be driven by realism. It is the situation on the ground in Baghdad that no surge is going to solve the problem. I think those who are leaking this report in advance of it coming out have it backwards. A surge to solve the sectarian violence is not going to work. We ought to have the sectarian violence subside because Iraqi Sunnis and Shiites decide that it is more in their interests to reconcile than it is to fight the old hatred fights. At the same time, it would be my recommendation, as the Iraq Study Group report has recommended, that we start moving more to a training mission from a combat mission. Only if the sectors decide they are going to reconcile, then we, the United States, can help them be better prepared in a training mission instead of a combat mission. It is my hope that the Saudis would utilize their extensive tribal Sunni contacts in order to urge those Sunnis in Iraq that the only way you are going to see a better end of the day is to have some reconciliation. And the Saudis told me that they are now starting to see this opportunity.

There have been things that have come out in the last couple of weeks that I don't think bode too well for us. The one general who, time after time, came before our Senate Armed Services Committee and in whom I had a degree of trust in what he was saying

was General Abizaid. Now General Abizaid is going to retire. He not only speaks the language, he has been involved in that region of the world for years, yet his advice is no longer going to be sought. That, to me, is a mistake.

What is at stake is the entire region with the Iranian ascendancy. What is at stake is the more than 140,000 American troops who are there now and all of those who will be rotated there in the future. What is at stake in the Middle East and central Asia is a part of the world of enormous importance to the United States.

It is hard to talk about this very difficult condition the United States is facing without also saying there is another policy we clearly ought to look at in order to make some changes to lessen our dependence on that part of the world in the future, and that is energy independence. If we did not have to import 60 percent of our daily consumption of oil from places such as the Persian Gulf region or Nigeria or Venezuela, wouldn't the defense outlook for the United States and the way we would approach our foreign policy in different parts of the world be considerably different and a lot easier for the United States?

As we eagerly anticipate the President's comments and his report on his new policy, let's understand there is not a new policy. There has not been a policy in the past. The idea that this surge of troops is a new policy is not new. We tried that before a couple of years ago and it did not work. It did not work because of the longstanding violence and hatred between those two groups of Islam which goes back to the 1600s, when the two brands of Islam started separating, and what ultimately came to be the Shiites separated from the Sunnis after the death of Mohammed. A separation, with the two sides wanting revenge is how this has played out over the years. It is still going on.

We have enormous stakes. We hope we can get it right. It is with a great deal of anticipation that I look forward to the Senate receiving the President's comments.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

(The remarks of Ms. STABENOW pertaining to the death of President Gerald R. Ford are printed in today's RECORD under "Morning Business.")

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AUTHORIZING SALARY ADJUSTMENTS FOR JUSTICES AND JUDGES OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 197, which was introduced earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows: A bill (S. 197) to authorize salary adjustments for justices and judges of the United States for fiscal year 2007.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I thank Senator REID for expediting passage of legislation I introduced today with him and Senators SPECTER, REID, FEINSTEIN, and CORNYN to authorize cost-of-living adjustments for the salaries of United States Justices and judges for fiscal year 2007. This is a step I supported taking—and that we should have taken—in the last Congress. I am glad that a holdup on the Republican side that prevented us from passing this last week was resolved so that we could move forward in a unanimous and bipartisan way to take care of this unfinished business in the Senate. I hope that the House of Representatives will join us in making cost-of-living increase for judges an early item of business.

The legislation we pass today is a modest step towards addressing the issues raised by Chief Justice Roberts in his "Year End Report on the Federal Judiciary." I have commended the Chief Justice for speaking out on behalf of the judiciary and for seeking to strengthen the independence of the judicial branch. Judicial independence is critical for preserving our system of government and protecting the rights of all Americans.

In 1975, Congress enacted the Executive Salary Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act, intended to give judges, Members of Congress and other high-ranking executive branch officials automatic COLAs as accorded other Federal employees unless rejected by Congress. In 1981, Congress enacted section 140 of Public Law 97-92, mandating specific congressional action to give COLAs to judges. With the end of the last Congress, however, the continuing resolutions providing funding failed to suspend section 140, thus ensuring that no COLA would be provided for Federal judges during the current fiscal year, unless other action is taken. Four years ago, the last time Congress missed making a scheduled cost-of-living adjustment for the judiciary, I sponsored remedial legislation that was enacted. I have done so, again, in the hope that Congress will correct this slight.

The bipartisan legislation we pass today provides for a COLA for Federal judges consistent with the law and with fairness. I have worked hard as ranking member of the Judiciary Committee over the last 4 years to ensure the independence of the judiciary.

Some of us have tried over the years to improve the compensation of judges. I have sponsored bills for general increases in judicial compensation. One such measure did pass the Senate a few years ago only to be stalled by the Republican House leadership. Senator FEINSTEIN was the lead sponsor of such a bill last Congress.

I intend to do what I can to convince Congress to fairly evaluate this issue and the Chief Justice's arguments, so that we can see what solutions may be possible. I hope Congress and the President will reconsider a broader judicial compensation measure this year to adjust their salaries. We have taken a first step now by taking up and passing this bill allowing for the annual judicial COLA that was not enacted last year.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time, passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table; that any statements related to this bill be printed in the RECORD. I also indicate this matter has been cleared with Senator MCCONNELL.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (S. 197) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 197

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. AUTHORIZATION OF SALARY ADJUSTMENTS FOR FEDERAL JUSTICES AND JUDGES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Pursuant to section 140 of Public Law 97-92, justices and judges of the United States are authorized during fiscal year 2007 to receive a salary adjustment in accordance with section 461 of title 28, United States Code.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This Act shall take effect as of January 1, 2007.

HONEST LEADERSHIP ACT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, tomorrow morning the Senate will begin the hard work of moving our country forward with S. 1. S. 1 is the ethics, lobbying, earmark reform legislation that will be before this body tomorrow.

After a long time, it seems, the new Senate has been sworn in. Our 10 new colleagues are here. Today we govern, and we start with S. 1. It is called the Legislative Transparency and Accountability Act. When passed, this legislation will help ensure America has a government as good and as honest as the people whom it serves. I want the record to be spread with my appreciation for Senator MCCONNELL cosponsoring this legislation. As the Chair knows and has worked so hard to promote bipartisanship, we cannot accomplish anything in this 110th Congress unless the legislative body works together on a bipartisan basis and sends legislation to the President that he will sign. Senator MCCONNELL set the right tone in agreeing to cosponsor this most important legislation. Again, I